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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Statements on the occasion of the ninth Africa Industrialization Day

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Today, 20 November, marks the ninth anniversary of Africa Industrialization Day. Nine years ago, the General Assembly proclaimed this date as Africa Industrialization Day to highlight, raise public awareness of and harness international support for Africa's industrial development. It gives me great pleasure, as President of the Assembly and on a personal basis, to participate in the observance of this important event. For the first time, our celebration of this event in New York is being transmitted simultaneously to our friends and colleagues at the Industrial Development Board of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in Vienna, and we extend a special greeting to them. I should also like to commend UNIDO, as well as the Organization of African Unity and the Economic Commission for Africa, for organizing today's events.

Two years ago, the General Assembly declared the period 1997-2006 the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. In so doing, the Assembly called for concerted and coordinated efforts to eradicate poverty through national actions and international cooperation. It is therefore fitting that this year's theme for Africa Industrialization Day should be "Poverty alleviation through industry". We need hardly remind ourselves that nearly half of the population of Africa lives on less than a dollar a day of income. Of the 48 countries classified as least developed today, 34 are in Africa.

Poverty eradication means giving the poor services and opportunities as well as helping them to help themselves. Education, health, means of livelihood, nutrition, sanitation and shelter are all important elements in reducing poverty. But there is another dimension to poverty eradication that has received less attention in recent years. I refer to the role that industrialization plays and should play in supporting and sustaining progress.

In today's globalized economy, industrialization remains an essential element in economic and social development. It is the driving force behind dynamic and competitive economies. Countries that have achieved a high level of industrialization, particularly those that have followed policies that benefit the humblest of their people, the poorest, have been the most successful in eradicating poverty.

The experience of the past 200 years has shown that industrialization is closely linked to combatting and eradicating poverty. Industry creates and expands employment, generates income and improves the quality of life. It adds value to agricultural products and stimulates technological advances — something that every country requires. It creates economic opportunities for women, thereby generating family incomes that alleviate and lessen the burdens on the home.

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Recent economic revival in many African countries has sparked renewed optimism in the economic future of the region. Africa as a whole has grown by more than 4 per cent annually over the past three years, the highest growth rate experienced by the continent in the last 20 years. But difficult problems can be seen to lie ahead. The effects of the global economic crisis are manifesting themselves in the region. The slowdown in the world economy and falling commodity prices are reducing demand for Africa's exports. Increasing competition from lower-priced products from other regions is also reducing demand. Thus official development assistance, already declining, is expected to decline even further. Foreign direct investment is also expected to fall next year, and high external debt, particularly that suffered by the least-developed countries of Africa, continues to be an excessively onerous burden.

How can Africa cope with these challenges and at the same maintain the momentum of the growth that it has demonstrated in the annual 4 per cent it has sustained over several years? The key unquestionably lies in concerted efforts on two fronts: decisive national action adopted on the basis of strengthened institutions on the one hand and, on the other, the promotion and receipt of international cooperation.

At the national level, African countries must maintain sound macro-economic policies and move ahead with economic reforms. They must continue to create conditions that will encourage and attract investment that will lead to broad-based development. In order to reduce their very heavy dependence on a few commodity exports they need to diversify and modernize their industrial and productive sectors. In short, they need, clearly and forthrightly, to become a part of the process of industrialization.

Through industrial development, African countries can sell a wider range of goods on the international market. They can better compete and benefit economically from the opening of markets. Industrialization can help them to participate more fully and more effectively in the globalized economy.

On the international level — and, of course, this concerns the United Nations — the international community must do more to support the efforts of African countries. It must provide immediate debt relief, particularly for the highly indebted least-developed countries, and it must improve Africa's access to foreign markets, encourage foreign direct investment and increase official development assistance to the region. The United Nations system itself must work more closely together to mobilize resources and technical expertise in support of Africa's development. UNIDO, as the United Nations agency having a mandate to promote sustainable industrial development, has, I am certain, an important role to play in supporting Africa's industrialization.

In conclusion, Africa Industrialization Day symbolizes the solidarity of the international community with Africa. It calls to mind the myriad sacrifices and efforts of Africans to lift themselves out of poverty. This Day highlights the fact that today Africa is the primary actor in its own development process. And it is also a day on which the international community should renew its commitment to the development of these African countries. In a spirit of partnership and shared responsibility let us once again, as we have at other sessions, express our steadfast support for Africa's industrial development.

The Deputy Secretary-General: I am very pleased to join members today to launch Africa Industrialization Day 1998. I would wish first to offer greetings and best wishes to the members of the Industrial Development Board of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). As you mentioned in your statement, Mr. President, for the first time New York and Vienna are celebrating this event together, in real time, through television. I think we all agree that this is a most welcome innovation.

In the past year, the United Nations has sought to renew its thinking and its efforts towards Africa's development. In particular, the Secretary-General offered a candid and comprehensive report on Africa's conflicts and how such conflicts may be prevented in the future. In the report, the Secretary-General emphasized that all efforts at securing peace had to be combined with steps towards ending Africa's poverty. Specifically, he called for the promotion of investment and economic growth, for ensuring adequate levels of international aid, for reducing debt burdens and for opening international markets to Africa's products.

I am therefore particularly pleased that the theme of this year's Africa Industrialization Day is "Poverty alleviation through industrialization". There is already a wide consensus that the occasional good harvest and rising commodity prices are not sufficient to sustain economic recovery and growth. The development of the manufacturing sector as principal engine of economic growth and employment-generation is pivotal to ensuring

the stability, peace and prosperity of nations. Without a doubt, the ability of the African private sector to take advantage of the opportunities offered by globalization and liberalization will determine the prospects for overall development.

The mid-1990s may have marked a turning point for the economies of sub-Saharan Africa. After two decades of marginalization, during which the region lost market share in global trade and in foreign direct investment, sub-Saharan African began to recover in the period 1994-1995. Credit for this promising upturn should go to the people of Africa, who have endured much hardship in order to introduce stabilization measures, structural reforms and liberalized markets. We in the United Nations system have also played our role in supporting the efforts of our African partners in this endeavour.

However, this year's commemoration of Africa Industrialization Day takes place at a critical juncture in the global economy. The impact on Africa and the least developed countries could be severe if a global recession resulted in a further fall in commodity prices. We will continue to alert the international community to this danger and further engage the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and our major donors in the efforts to contain the crisis.

While ultimately, competitiveness arises at the enterprise level, the past year has taught us all that the role of the State is of critical importance. Four elements critical to competitiveness — infrastructure, governance, skills and technology — are dependent on the State working in partnership with the private sector. If the State fails to maintain law and order, to guarantee the security of individuals and investments, to protect intellectual property rights, to build and maintain an efficient infrastructure, to provide adequate education and health systems, enterprise-level competitiveness will be undermined.

Let me close by emphasizing that African nations must take the lead in promoting private-sector-led industrial transformation. We In the international community, and the United Nations system in particular, will continue to play our catalytic role. But ultimately, only Africa's own initiative and imagination will make the difference between poverty and prosperity. Only Africa's own determination to end the conflicts that still plague many of its peoples can make the difference between lasting stability and endless suffering. Africa must create, through good governance, the rejection of violence and the embrace of free, legitimate government, the enabling environments for investment and economic growth. Then, but only then, can lasting prosperity and peace follow for all its people.

Agenda item 163

Financing of the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone

Report of the Fifth Committee (A/53/680)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): If there is no proposal under rule 66 of the rules of procedure, I shall take it that the General Assembly decides not to discuss the report of the Fifth Committee that is before it today.

It was so decided.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Statements will therefore be limited to explanations of vote or position.

The positions of delegations regarding the recommendation of the Fifth Committee have been made clear in the Committee and are reflected in the relevant official records. May I remind members that under paragraph 7 of decision 34/401 the Assembly agreed that

> "When the same draft resolution is considered in a Main Committee and in plenary meeting, a delegation should, as far as possible, explain its vote only once, i.e., either in the Committee or in plenary meeting, unless that delegation's vote in plenary meeting is different from its vote in the Committee".

May I also remind delegations that, also in accordance with General Assembly decision 34/401, explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Before we take action on the recommendation contained in the report of the Fifth Committee, I should like to advise representatives that we are going to proceed to take a decision in the same manner as was done in the Committee.

The Assembly will now take a decision on the draft resolution recommended by the Fifth Committee in paragraph 7 of its report (A/53/680).

The Fifth Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution 53/29).

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 163.

Agenda item 59 (*continued*)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

Draft resolution (A/53/L.16)

Amendment (A/53/L.42)

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The most serious issue now facing the United Nations is the reform of the Security Council. A number of meetings of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council have been held since its establishment in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/26 of 1993. Various detailed and constructive proposals relating to all aspects of the Security Council have been suggested and considered in depth at those meetings. However, to our regret, there has been no consensus or even general agreement on specific proposals until now, as we can see in the report of the Open-ended Working Group contained in document A/52/47. Member States showed no room for any concession or compromise during the whole discussion process and only repeated their previous individual positions.

In particular, the expansion of permanent membership still remains a source of acute confrontation among individual countries and groups. Even though consensus was achieved long ago on expanding the composition of the Security Council itself in conformity with the changed international situation and the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations, crucial questions are still far from being settled, such as what the total size of the enlarged Security Council should be; whether expansion should take place in both categories, and if so, how many additional seats should be distributed in each category; whether new permanent members should be given veto power; and so forth. At present, many countries are opposing the expansion of the permanent category, arguing that the existing permanent membership runs counter to the principle of the sovereign equality of Member States and insisting upon rotational permanent membership in case of its expansion. In a nutshell, the crux of the matter concerning the expansion of the composition of the Security Council is the expansion of the permanent category. The process of discussion on this issue up to now has clearly shown that it would be very difficult to reconcile the conflicting views of countries in the near future.

The enhancement of the functions and roles of the Security Council in the maintenance of international peace and security is not necessarily subject to the expansion of the permanent category. Under the Charter of the United Nations the maintenance of international peace and security is the mutual responsibility of all Member States. International peace and security cannot be maintained with money; they are possible only when acts of domination and interference in the internal affairs of other countries are put to an end and just and fair political and economic relations based on respect for the sovereign equality of all Member States are established in the world.

Frankly speaking, the discussions on expansion of the permanent category have inevitably caused serious conflicts of interest among countries because expansion would allow a few countries to take on a privileged status in the United Nations. It is because of this inevitability that the discussions on the expansion of the permanent category have born no result even after five years, but rather have entailed the furtherance of confrontation among countries.

Taking fully into consideration the complicated situation concerning this issue, we suggested on several occasions putting the expansion of the permanent category on the back burner for a while and proceeding first with the easily agreeable expansion of the non-permanent category. We believe that at the present stage expanding only the non-permanent category on the basis of the principle of equitable geographical distribution is a realistic way to attain our reform goal of democratizing the Security Council and enhancing its credibility to some extent.

In this regard, we support the proposal of the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement that if there is no agreement on other categories, expansion should take

place for the time being only in the non-permanent category, as reflected in the Final Document of the twelfth summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held this year. Furthermore, the expansion of the permanent category can be discussed without any time-frame until an agreement emerges.

In this regard, my delegation would like to make an issue of the fact that certain countries are in their own way attempting to predetermine that Japan become a permanent member and defining qualifications for new permanent members, selection methods, et cetera. We think that this is unreasonable and discriminatory against the countries of other regions that are demanding permanent seats.

We oppose the permanent membership of Japan because it has no correct notion of peace and war. Japan is embellishing its record of aggression with nostalgia, refusing to liquidate its past crimes and abusing the Security Council for its own political purposes in total disregard of even the mandates of the Council itself. If Japan is allowed to become a permanent member, this will be tantamount to tolerating its past crimes and fanning its overseas expansionist ambitions, thus having a negative impact on the situation in the region of North-East Asia — one of the world's flashpoints — and threatening world peace and security.

To make matters worse, Japan's permanent membership would bring about the concentration of permanent members in the region of North-East Asia, the result of which would be detrimental to the goal of the reform — both in view of the principle of equitable geographical representation and in the light of the geopolitical characteristics of the region.

It is for these reasons that we solemnly declare once again our strong opposition to an expansion of the permanent membership of the Security Council that includes Japan as a permanent member.

With the discussions on the reform of the Security Council being prolonged as they are now, some countries say that this is due to the lack of political will on the part of Member States. But we think that this is a reflection of their sincere political will to democratize the Security Council by all means. From this viewpoint, my delegation reaffirms its support for the just demand of the majority of Member States — including the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement — that no time-frame should be imposed on the reform efforts and that any draft resolution with Charter amendment implications should be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the membership of the United Nations, as referred to in Article 108 of the Charter.

In conclusion, my delegation looks forward to the Security Council's being reformed in conformity with the demands and aspirations of Member States to democratize the United Nations.

Mr. Shen Guofang (China) (*interpretation from Chinese*): First of all, Mr. President, allow me to extend, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, our congratulations to you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Open-ended Working Group on Security Council reform. I would also like to express our gratitude to Ambassador Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Jayanama of Thailand, the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group for the previous session, for the contributions they have made to the smooth conduct of the work of the Working Group during that session. I am confident that under your personal guidance, even greater progress will be made in the work of the Working Group during the current session of the General Assembly.

China is in favour of necessary and appropriate reform of the Security Council. We believe that the equitable enlargement of the Council to make it more representative and the improvement of its working methods will enable the Council to better carry out its lofty responsibility of maintaining international peace and security, as entrusted to it by the Charter of the Organization.

The core issue in the reform of the Security Council is how to enlarge it. The discussions in the Working Group over the past five years have clearly shown that countries still hold vastly different positions on this major issue. The Chinese delegation is of the view that the primary task in enlarging the Council should be to resolve the problem of the under-representation of developing countries in the Council in accordance with the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

Since the adoption in 1963 by the General Assembly of a resolution to enlarge the Security Council, the membership of the United Nations has increased by nearly half, and most of the new Members are developing countries. As one of the main organs of the Organization, the Security Council should reflect such a change in its composition. After years of work in the Working Group, it has now become widely accepted and acknowledged that the representation of developing countries in the Council should be strengthened. This

hard-won consensus should be the basis and prerequisite for further reform of the Council.

Regrettably, while developed countries are, in a sense, over-represented in the Council, and the so-called quick-fix proposal has met with opposition from the overwhelming majority of Member States, some countries are still harbouring illusions about the proposal and trying every possible means to sell it under one guise or another. This simply will not work.

It must be pointed out that the Security Council is a political, rather than economic, organ. The wealth of a country should not be used as a criterion in the enlargement of the Council, nor should the Council be turned into a club for the rich or the board of directors of a corporation. The goal of Council reform is not to cater to the concerns of a few countries only. If, following its enlargement, the representation of developing countries is not enhanced and the imbalance between the developing and developed countries is not redressed, then the reform of the Council will not be considered a success, and a large number of developing countries, including China, will not be able to accept that kind of result.

Another important aspect of the reform of the Security Council is the improvement of its working methods and the enhancement of the transparency of its work so that Member States can better understand and participate more in that work. In recent years, heeding the views of the general membership, the Council has indeed made consistent efforts to improve its working methods and enhance the transparency of its work. However, it still has a long way to go before it can meet the expectations of the Member States.

The question of sanctions has given rise to concern on the part of Member States. Many of the sanctions currently in place have not only failed to achieve the expected results, but on the contrary have inflicted untold suffering on the people of the countries concerned, especially women and children. The General Assembly adopted resolution 51/241 on the question of sanctions, and, in deciding on sanction-related issues, the Council should take into full consideration the relevant recommendations set out in that resolution. The Council should also continue to strengthen its coordination and cooperation with other organs of the Organization so as better to tackle the fresh challenges facing the international community.

The Chinese delegation has always held that while the reform of the Security Council should be undertaken with a sense of urgency, it should also be done in an orderly and gradual fashion. Vital interests are at stake for various countries in this exercise, and therefore one must not be overeager to achieve quick results. The outcome of reform must be able to withstand the test of history. To this end, the vast number of Member States should be allowed to hold thorough and in-depth discussions with a view to reaching consensus. We believe that the draft resolution introduced yesterday by the Ambassador of Egypt will help us move in that direction, it is our view that the draft will have the support of the majority of Member States. We hope that the Working Group will continue to conduct thorough discussions and consultations on various plans and proposals on the reform of the Council in a fair and reasonable manner, with adequate openness and transparency.

Mr. Saliba (Malta): It is again my pleasure to address this Assembly on this very important issue. The significance of this issue can be seen both in the attendance and participation in this debate today, as well as in the number of meetings of the Open-Ended Working Group on Security Council reform held during the last session of the General Assembly.

The fact that no agreements were reached despite the Group's having met 56 times this year should not discourage us. Rather than be interpreted as a negative sign, it should be construed to underline that the issues at stake and their consequences are so far-reaching that detailed and in-depth discussion is required. This is especially relevant in view of the fact that what is decided now will have far-reaching implications for the capacity of the Security Council to fulfil its primary responsibility in the maintenance of international peace and security.

As stated by my delegation during the general debate,

> "The question of which categories of membership to expand dominates the discussion and attracts attention. However, other important issues, such as the transparency and openness of the Council, continue to develop. Malta attaches great importance to this aspect, which benefits the widest majority of States." (*A/53/PV.19, p. 5*)

It is this question of transparency that is of vital importance. Security Council decisions are legally binding on all Member States. The procedures for enhancing consultations between the Security Council and

the General Assembly are of immense value. We note that the improved methods introduced in recent years not only nurture the symbiotic relationship that should link the Council and the Assembly, but also prove that conferring does not hinder the Council's ability to intervene with the required swiftness. It emerged clearly during discussions in the Working Group that there is more than a broad agreement on the question of increased transparency. A number of effective measures have been fleshed out, and we look forward to a final agreement on their implementation as a means of enhancing the relationship between the general membership of the Organization and the Security Council.

In seeking solutions, even on the type of expansion of the Security Council, the need for general agreement must be underscored. There has been much debate and controversy over what constitutes a general agreement. It is our belief that this should not be seen in quantitative terms but rather should be viewed as a guarantee that solutions have the political support to come to fruition. If agreement is to be reached on this sensitive issue, it must be sufficiently comprehensive to stand the test of time. Quick-fix solutions and staged approaches could undermine the credibility of the reform of the Council.

The importance of agreeing that the Security Council should be expanded cannot be undermined nor underestimated. This is in itself an achievement that requires further elucidation as to its nature, scope and type. One of the important objectives of any enlargement of the Council's membership must be balance and equity in its composition, in view of the present increased United Nations membership. Account must be taken of regional and geographical considerations and of the need to provide reasonable opportunities for all Members to take their turn in serving on the Council. Any expansion must ensure that the opportunity for all Members to serve on the Council is not diminished. Thus we have always stated our attachment to principles contained in the Charter such as those outlined in Article 23, paragraph 2, which guarantees greater rotation among non-permanent Members and guards against possible restrictions on such a rotation.

Consensus on the question of the categories of an expanded Council continues to evade us. Questions have arisen in the discussion on the issue of expanding the permanent membership. How can one determine permanence on the basis of criteria that are themselves non-permanent and change over time? Rather than see this issue dominate and delay progress, we have supported the Non-Aligned Movement's fall-back position to limit enlargement to the non-permanent category for the time being. This would allow the process to move forward without prejudice to the eventual continuation of deliberations on permanent-category expansion.

Another issue of which the Working Group has been seized is the question of the veto. This has always sparked impassioned discussion and debate, yet agreement is still elusive. The reform of the Security Council and its expansion, in whatever form, will require a discussion of the Council's decision-making processes. The question of the majority that would be required for the adoption of a resolution by an expanded Council bears on the question of the veto. A number of suggestions and ideas have been put forward. Such ideas may eventually lead to agreement on the use of the veto, whether through its limitation under Chapter VII of the Charter or in terms of a qualified veto. My delegation welcomes the discussions on this item which are aimed at contributing a realistic compromise.

The above are the broad parameters within which we view the question of reform of the Security Council. The credibility of any action taken on this issue demands that we safeguard and promote the common ground necessary for effective Security Council reform.

It is for this reason that we subscribe to the position that, as a minimum, any resolution with Charter-amendment implications must be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the membership of United Nations, as stipulated in Article 108 of the Charter. In this way we will be paving the way for a guarantee that any action on this issue will have the necessary political support to see the process of reform to fruition.

Mr. Legwaila (Botswana): In making my contribution to the debate on this agenda item, let me first of all reiterate the abiding commitment of my delegation to the positions taken by the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement. I do so in the belief that these positions, as all others, are meritorious beyond the reach of doubt and worthy of the serious consideration of this Assembly.

Five years have elapsed since the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council began its deliberations. It is rather disappointing that progress has been painfully slow toward reaching agreement on the key issues relating to

the reform of the Security Council. The slow progress is, however, a reflection of the great interest Member States attach to Council reform and of the divergence and diversity of ideas and opinions on how to go about that reform. The only point on which Member States seem to agree, albeit for different reasons, is that there is indeed a need to reform the Security Council so it can reflect present-day international realities and thus the changed circumstances of the world scene since the United Nations was founded 53 years ago.

We have consistently maintained the position that the question of the expansion and restructuring of the Security Council should be considered in the context of the overall reform of the United Nations Organization. The reforms which were carried out last year pursuant to the Secretary-General's report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" were illustrative in this regard. The Security Council should undergo similar reforms. The monumental changes that have taken place since 1945, and especially in the last decade, call for reforming the whole United Nations, for a revitalized United Nations that can cope effectively and efficiently with its increased global responsibilities.

I have already alluded to the broad consensus that is emerging in the Assembly on the need to increase the current membership of the Security Council in both the permanent- and non-permanent-member categories. The membership of the United Nations has increased from 51 States in 1945 to 185 States today. All regions and cultures of the world are represented in the membership. Yet, the membership of the Security Council is not by any calculation reflective of this geographical plurality and cultural diversity. The present composition of the Council's membership, especially its permanent-member category, is predominantly Euro-centred, which is certainly a throwback to a bygone period in history. And if some of the proposals before the Working Group were to be approved as part of the reform of the Council, the European dominance of the Council would become even more unabashedly pronounced.

Is this the reformed Security Council we have all been striving to establish over the last five years? I do not think so. Should we then only add permanent seats for the countries of the South to redress the imbalance created in 1945, as some have suggested? The proposal is open to question. Certainly one of the legacies of the founding fathers of the United Nations is that they established an imperfect and undemocratic Organization. Should we perpetuate this legacy? The differences of opinion on this question are unremittingly stalemated and ossified. If the veto negates the democratic principle, is there wisdom in extending the privilege to a few more Member States? Opinions are diametrically opposed on this point. If the increase in the permanent-member category is problematic, why don't we increase membership only in the non-permanent category, where some think there is less acrimony? There is no early agreement here either, partly because the whole process of Security Council reform is treated as a composite package. And are we ready to continue this debate to the point of sterility and meaninglessness? I hope not.

I have posed these questions not because I have answers to all of them, nor do I claim to have a magic wand to make them easily answerable. The Assembly must have heard several of them asked before. I raise them simply to state that there will be no movement forward in our debate so long as the problems they present are not addressed with a sense of finality.

My delegation attaches great importance to the question of Security Council reform. It has wider implications for the understanding and appreciation by future generations of the role of the United Nations in world affairs. True, the founding fathers may have been less than democratic in conferring certain powers and privileges upon some Member States. Their action in that circumstance in history, although their motivation may be deprecable today, curried favour with the majority of those present at the San Francisco Conference, because the overriding interest at the time was the creation of the world Organization. They bequeathed to us the present Organization, complete with its imperfections, including the simple contradiction represented in Article 27, paragraph 3, relating to veto power, and Article 2, paragraph 1, relating to the sovereign equality of Member States.

It will therefore be a sad day indeed if, in our attempts to recreate the United Nations, we end up with an Organization which is even less democratic and less transparent than the one with which we started. Today democracy and transparency are the rallying concepts at the national level throughout the world, and where else but here at the United Nations should the democratic ideal be seen in action? Those of us who come from pluralistic societies are not afraid of democratic change at the United Nations. We equally appreciate that there are very few individuals or nations in world history that relinquished positions of power and privilege for the common good. But a middle ground can always be found

in which those Member States with entrenched powers and privileges will be restrained, or will not find the need to use them in the Security Council.

The overwhelming collective will and aspiration of Member States should be the guiding light for any decision or action taken by the Council, but in such a way that aggression is not aided and abetted and, more importantly, in such a way that this does not unnecessarily become the tyranny of the majority against the privileged few. Nor would we be in favour of the dictatorship of the minority.

The United Nations of the future, and especially the Security Council, must be an international consensus-builder in both intra- and inter-State conflict situations. The Security Council has shown serious deficiencies in recent years in addressing internal conflicts. Since we are likely to witness more internal conflict situations in the future, as the post-cold-war era continues to unfold, it is the imperative of our time that we should have in place a Security Council which could be guided by the broader interests of the international community rather than the narrow national interests of the powerful Member States in the Security Council.

Security Council reform would not be complete without the improvement of the Council's working methods and decision-making processes. Having served in the Security Council only a few years ago, we are fully aware of what it is doing to improve its working methods and decision-making processes, but a lot still remains to be done. As long as the flow of information does not reach Council members in a transparent manner, or some members of the Council become privy to the content of the Secretary-General's reports before others, or decisions are made outside the Council by the permanent members, in whatever groupings or permutations, the working methods of the Council will continue to leave much to be desired. More importantly, the Security Council should resort more than ever before to the use of general and open debates on all issues of international concern.

The utility of informal consultations as a tool through which the Council could get information from sources that would be reluctant to provide such information in a public meeting is not doubtful. But informal consultations should not replace formal meetings in which all Member States can participate and their points of view be taken into consideration when the Security Council makes final decisions. My delegation is fully aware of complaints that Member States do not participate in large numbers in the general debates whenever these are held. This cannot, however, be a good reason to deny Member States the right to contribute to the formulation of decisions which are binding on their countries and peoples. The more meetings are open to the rest of the membership of this Organization, the more Member States will feel they have collective ownership of and the collective responsibility for the decisions and actions taken by the Security Council. They would thus have only themselves to blame if they did not make their points of view known.

My delegation believes it is within the power and ability of United Nations Member States to reform any organ of the world body and adapt it to present-day and future international realities. We need only muster the requisite political will and adequate flexibility in tackling the issues at hand. We achieved a lot last year in reforming and renewing the United Nations. We can surely do the same in the reform of the Security Council if we can avoid the prevalence of parochial interests and antiquated ideas. The onus for the success or failure of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council rests with the membership of the Assembly. We can decide either to make meaningful progress or to continue to debate in circles, like a broken record, at the next meetings of the Working Group.

Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia): When the Working Group on reform of the Security Council resumed its sessions last March, many Member States continued to address pertinent aspects of this question, sought to come to grips with the complexities of the issues involved and made concerted efforts to resolve them. This past year the Open-ended Working Group has enabled us to achieve significant progress on an important aspect of the reform — namely, the improvement of the working methods of the Council. However, the divergent views expressed by a great number of delegations have proved that questions relating to the expansion and functioning of the Council still represent a formidable task.

During the last five years, the Working Group deliberated at length on a wide range of issues and contributed to further understanding of the ramifications of the issues involved. In this context, we have always emphasized that its functioning should be based on equality, equity and transparency, in representation as well as in the decision-making process. Furthermore, the role of the Security Council has grown substantially in recent years, as its members have discovered a sense of

common purpose in confronting manifest dangers to peace and security. But even as we applaud the Council's belated fulfilment of its Charter mandate, we call for its reform in order to render it more representative and democratically accountable.

Indisputably, an expansion of the Council's membership makes it imperative to involve more States, equitably distributed geographically, that are prepared to shoulder the burden of maintaining peace and security. It is also pertinent to note that the power exercised over its decision-making process by a handful of States named in 1945 calls for revision. Hence, the Council should undergo a process of review and revitalization in order to ensure its dynamic adaptation to the evolving realities on the international scene so that it can continue to play an effective role as the focal point for the management of the critical issues of our time.

It is undeniable that the present arrangements, especially the permanent membership, do not reflect either the current configuration of membership of the United Nations or the profound changes and transitions that have taken place in the global arena. Consequently, we face the untenable anomaly of four out of five permanent members of the Council being from developed countries, while developing nations are not adequately represented. Our aim should therefore be comprehensive in nature so as to provide equitable and balanced representation and facilitate the participation of all States to reflect the universal character of the world body.

Another crucial issue is that of the veto. The veto has been rightly described as anachronistic and an excessive privilege unwarranted by the realities of our time, and also a violation of the Charter principle of the sovereign equality of Member States. Though we have witnessed a relative decline in its use, it has not become extinct. We are concerned that its retention would erode the trust and confidence of the vast majority of Member States and the integrity and objectivity of the Security Council. The veto power, which ensures an exclusive and dominant role for a few powerful nations, is also incompatible with the ongoing endeavours to reform and recast the Council's structure and procedures. A democratic Security Council is vital to its future efficacy. Indeed, one also identifies what may be termed a hidden veto. In my delegation's view, we should pursue our endeavours to limit its use, with the objective of its elimination.

In the discussion of the above issues, it is clear that divergence of opinion has continued to prevail and consequently general agreement has continued to elude us. In all these endeavours it is critical to recognize the views of the overwhelming majority of Member States, which cannot be marginalized. Neither should the status quo be perpetuated, which would profoundly affect the interests of the majority, whose legitimate aspiration is nothing more than the enhancement of the representative character of the Security Council as well as greater transparency and democratization in its functioning.
If this sacrosanct principle of the majority will is to prevail, it is only logical that any resolution with Charter amendment implications must necessarily be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the United Nations membership, as stipulated in Article 108 of the Charter. Anything less would detract from the commitments that are contained in the Charter and would fail to meet the test of legitimacy. It is also pertinent to note that the heads of States or Government of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement, at its twelfth summit, in Durban, two months ago, resoundingly reaffirmed this principled position.

In view of that fact, it is imperative that the deliberations in the Open-ended Working Group be continued. In this context, the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.16, which reflects the basic position of the non-aligned countries as articulated at their recent summit meeting, held in Durban, rightly stresses that Security Council reform should not be subjected to any imposed time-frame, as this would have a negative impact and could even widen the schism that already exists among Member States. It would be prudent to allow sufficient time for Member States to further reflect on the wide range of contentious questions and their implications with a view to resolving them in an equitable, fair and impartial manner. We are also confronted with the reality that the question of Security Council reform is perhaps one of the most challenging ever faced by Member States since the establishment of our Organization more than five decades ago.

Hence, in our view, draft resolution A/53/L.16 portrays a realistic and balanced view of the developments that have taken place in the protracted deliberations of the Working Group. It does not prejudice the positions taken by any Member State or groups of States. It seeks to facilitate more focused discussions at the Working Group's forthcoming sessions. It emphasizes the paramount importance of Article 108 of the Charter with regard to any amendments which will be a logical culmination of the reform process and which can be carried out only by a credible majority of the Member States.

My delegation also deems it essential to emphasize that the draft resolution is procedural and not substantive in nature and hence comes under the rubric of rule 85 of the provisional rules of procedure of the General Assembly.

For these reasons, we support the draft resolution and commend the delegation of Egypt for its initiative in introducing it for consideration by the General Assembly. Its adoption will provide a new impetus to our ongoing endeavours, not only in reassessing our positions, but also in making substantive contributions leading to a general agreement on the Council's reform and expansion.

Finally, we reaffirm the Open-ended Working Group as the appropriate modality through which to continue our concerted endeavours so that it can realize the mandate that has been entrusted to it by the General Assembly. Hence, we endorse the continuation of its work. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its sincere appreciation for Ambassador Wilhelm Breitenstein of Finland and Ambassador Asda Jayanama of Thailand, the former co-Vice-Chairmen of the Open-ended Working Group, for their invaluable contribution.

My delegation extends to you, Mr. President, our best wishes in discharging your onerous task as Chairman of the Working Group and remains confident that with your vast experience, creativity and stewardship, our deliberations will lead to a fruitful conclusion. My delegation would like to express its support concerning your suggestion, expressed on other occasions, on the need to enhance the working relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council. It is indeed essential that the General Assembly, which represents all the Members of the United Nations, should be involved in questions relating to international peace and security. Likewise, we remain hopeful for the success of your endeavours to designate two new co-Vice-Chairmen of the Group. Let me assure you of Indonesia's cooperation in these endeavours.

Mr. Bune (Fiji): Fiji continues to reiterate its concern over the inequitable and undemocratic geographic representation in the membership of the Security Council, both the permanent and the non-permanent membership. The numerical limit of permanent membership, five, and the limited geographical span of the five are anachronisms in this decade of the nineties and are unfair, unjust and undemocratic. The numerical limit of non-permanent members, 10 out of 180 other Member countries, is inequitable, undemocratic and anachronistic.

Here we are at the United Nations, espousing the principle of democracy, the universal practice of democracy in national administration and the principle of pluralism in multiracial countries, and we, contrary to our exhortations, pursue a system in the Security Council which is undemocratic, unjust, inequitable and is, to use a familiar term, a dictatorship of the elite in an international community in which sovereign equality is a principle of international law and practice.

As Fiji's Deputy Prime Minister said in her statement to the General Assembly on 29 September of this year, the more things have changed in our world, the more they have remained the same. The membership of the Security Council is a classic example of that paradox.

In 1996 and again last year, my delegation supported the proposal that permanent membership be increased from five to 10 members in order to address the concerns which I expressed earlier. On both occasions we stated that the additional five seats should be allocated as follows: one to Japan, one to Germany, one to Asia, one to Latin America and the Caribbean and one to Africa.

Our delegation is of the same disposition this year. We are, however, mindful of the vast number of considerations that have been expressed over similar proposals and are also conscious of the issue of unanimity in various regional groups over possible Member States for the additional seats. For example, it has been pointed out that if Japan becomes a permanent member, then Asia will have two permanent seats and, in all fairness and on the basis of equity and democracy, there should also be two from Africa and two from Latin America and the Caribbean. Others point out that if Germany becomes a permanent member, then there will be three members from Western Europe. On similar principles, Asia, Africa and Latin America and the Caribbean should have three each. Another criticism is that Western Europe will be over-represented, which will be unjust and unfair to Eastern Europe. My delegation further understands that within the regional groups themselves, there is a lack of consensus on the possible candidate or candidates.

In view of the complexity of the issue, the considerable amount of time it will take to resolve the matter and the dire need for us to expedite the reform of the Council, my delegation believes we should reprioritize our approach to the reform and give immediate and top priority to the increase in the non-

permanent membership of the Council, where we believe it is possible to find consensus.

The Fiji delegation continues to recommend that non-permanent membership should be increased from 10 to 17, an increase of seven. The geographic distribution of the 17 non-permanent seats should be as follows: Africa, five seats allocated — one for Southern Africa, one for West Africa, one for East Africa, one for Central Africa and one for the League of Arab States; Asia, four seats allocated — one for South Asia, one for West Asia, one for East Asia and one for the Pacific community, including Australia and New Zealand; Latin America and the Caribbean, three seats allocated — one for South America, one for Central America and one for the Caribbean; Western Europe and others, three, with due regard to the future enlargement of this group; and Eastern Europe, two, for a total of 17 seats.

My delegation will be addressing the issue of the numerical increase in regional groups and the reconfiguration of the groups when we take up agenda item 30, "United Nations reform: measures and proposals".

While we believe that our recommendation addresses the issue of equitable geographic distribution, there is still the issue of fairness, justice and democracy. Our delegation believes that the issue can be adequately addressed by a system of rotation in order to ensure that each member country enjoys the democratic right to serve as a non-permanent member of the Council. To serve that purpose, we support the retention of the ban on immediate re-election. This is the only way to ensure that the more than 70 Members of our Organization which have never served on the Council are given the opportunity to do so. We therefore call on other regional groups to emulate the fine example of Africa, where the principle of rotation has worked very well for a number of years now.

In the short term, my delegation submits that according to the principles of sovereign equality of States, justice, fair play and democracy, all permanent members should have similar powers, including the veto power. My delegation submits, however, that the veto power is anachronistic, lends itself to being applied in the narrow national interest of the member possessing it and should be eliminated. If it is to be retained at all, then its scope and use must apply only to the issues covered by Chapter VII of the Charter.

Current efforts to rationalize the Council's working methods to ensure its transparency have contributed significantly to its effectiveness and efficiency. In that regard, my delegation is pleased with the increase in the frequency of briefings provided by the Council to Member countries on specific issues considered by it. We continue to advocate that the Council should develop a sound working relationship with the other organs of our Organization. We particularly advocate a new and constructive relationship between the Council and the General Assembly, with the General Assembly playing a complementary role in the work and decision-making capacity of the Council. Such a relationship should include a consolidated system in which information exchanges flow not only from the Council to the Assembly but vice versa as well.

We all want the Council to be reformed. We all have views on how it should be reformed. We believe that we should begin to take action to carry out reform where there is apparent consensus or the likelihood of consensus and defer the difficult issues for continued discussions and debate.

Finally, we ask for action on draft resolution A/53/L.16 as soon as this debate has ended today, or next Monday, in order to get through and clarify this important issue as soon as possible, and thus breathe new life into the process of Security Council reform.

Mr. Arias (Spain) (*interpretation from Spanish*): I am gratified, Mr. President, that a debate of this momentous importance is being chaired by an individual possessed of such moral stature, prestige and fine legal sensibilities.

The item before us today is of fundamental importance, and therefore has been tremendously politicized. In consequence, a number of value judgements and descriptions have been circulated that seek to portray the sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.16 in a negative light.

To my surprise — and I would even venture to say astonishment — the sponsors of this draft resolution, including my own delegation, are accused of being obstructionists, provoking unnecessary controversies and causing schisms in the Organization. We are made out to be unthinking and frivolous people who, by setting a dangerous precedent, are causing irreparable harm to the Organization.

In the face of these totally gratuitous and almost deceitful assertions, I would like to make the following points.

The fundamental issue under consideration, and the specific focus of draft resolution A/53/L.16, is the reform of one of the principal bodies — perhaps the de facto principal body — of the Organization: the Security Council.

This being the case, we believe — and this is the aim of draft resolution A/53/L.16 — that any reform of the Council must be effected by the largest majority provided for in the Charter, as set forth in Article 108. This is based upon historical, legal and political criteria and on simple common sense. Any reform resulting from a different majority would be illogical, if not fraudulent. We are asking for the majority provided for in Article 108 to be applied to any reform of the Security Council; that majority is already provided for in the Charter. I stress that point because I should like to make it clear that we are not inventing anything or attempting surreptitiously to amend or reform the Charter. There is nothing hidden in draft resolution A/53/L.16; it is a transparent, straightforward and purely procedural text.

I find it very hard to understand the problems that this text poses for some delegations. I keep asking myself a question that I would like to share with all Members of the Organization: who is afraid of Article 108, and why? We would very much like to receive an answer that is as transparent and straightforward as draft resolution A/53/L.16.

Spain takes very seriously the issue under consideration. We are a responsible Member of the Organization. Nothing could be further from our purpose than the creation of divisions. We are in favour of Security Council reform, which we consider necessary and urgent and which we believe cannot be postponed. But such reform must be carried out in a legitimate manner, precisely in order to prevent the atmosphere of confrontation and division that would arise if the reform were not adopted by the largest majority legally established in the founding Charter of this Organization.

Who is afraid of Article 108? If we restrict ourselves to the issue of the Security Council, who is afraid of our reiterating clearly and unequivocally that in order to reform the Security Council we need the logical majority that the Charter demands for a subject of such importance? Who are the obstructionists and those creating unnecessary controversies? Those who, in accordance with the Charter, want far-reaching reform to be adopted by a reasonable and appropriate majority, or those who are trying to undermine that majority with arguments that are confused and beyond my understanding?

We hope that the Assembly's adoption of draft resolution A/53/L.16 at the conclusion of our debate will give fresh momentum to the process of reforming the Security Council.

Mr. Powles (New Zealand): As the report of the Open-ended Working Group in document A/52/47 shows, good progress was made during the fifty-second session, particularly with regard to improving the Council's working methods, and we are pleased to support the recommendations in paragraph 24 of the report on the continuation of the Working Group. As New Zealand's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, The Right Honourable Don McKinnon, indicated in his statement during the general debate, we consider reform of the Council's working methods to be equally as important as the complex issue of enlargement.

Among the many interesting ideas put forward during the past session was the proposal on decision-making in the Security Council made by a group of 10 Member States, which is included in annex XVI of the report. The proposal includes steps to curtail the scope and application of the veto. My delegation shares fully the cogent analysis presented in the observations in the first paragraph of that paper. In particular, we agree that general agreement on a comprehensive reform package is unlikely to be achieved without an understanding on the future scope and application of the veto.

As the proposal's reference to General Assembly resolution 267 (III) of 14 April 1949 suggests, curtailment of the veto is by no means a new topic. Over 50 years ago, several of the permanent members themselves drew attention to the problems inherent in the untrammelled use of the veto and made proposals in the Interim Committee of the General Assembly to correct it.

A further important matter on which considerable progress was made during the fifty-second session was the majority required for taking decisions on Security Council reform. In my delegation's view, in the debate which took place there was overwhelming agreement, with very few exceptions, that any resolution with Charter amendment implications must be adopted by the

two-thirds of the United Nations membership referred to in Article 108 of the Charter.

The great majority of delegations agreed that a decision to enlarge the membership of the Security Council, including increasing the number of permanent members — for its part, New Zealand has many times publicly acknowledged the strength of the case advanced by, for example, Japan — was of a quite different order from the kinds of decisions covered by the procedures included in Article 18, which requires only a two-thirds majority of those present and voting. That view was also held by this Assembly in 1963, when the enlargement of the Security Council was decided in accordance with Article 108.

For the Assembly to consider adopting under Article 18 a resolution in respect of Security Council enlargement which has Charter amendment implications would do grave damage not only to the 1963 precedent but also to the Charter itself. The procedure established in Article 108 was clearly intended by those who drafted the Charter to apply to decisions with Charter amendment implications, which are distinct from those kinds of important questions contemplated by Article 18, such as the annual election of Member States to rotational positions. The discussions on enlargement are of course about fundamental changes to the structure of one of the Organization's most important bodies.

Furthermore, resolution 48/26, under which the Open-ended Working Group was established, expresses the importance placed by the General Assembly on reaching general agreement on the issues before it. While "general agreement" may mean less than consensus, it surely means, at the very least, two thirds of the membership of the Organization.

I would like also to take this opportunity to associate myself with the remarks made by the Permanent Representative of Singapore yesterday afternoon, when he spoke of the special significance of this matter to the small States which make up more than half the membership of the Organization. Given the particular importance to them of the framework provided by the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security and the rule of international law, the small States, including my own country, have a strong interest in ensuring that any decision taken by the General Assembly on reform of the Security Council is made in accordance with the largest possible required majority.

New Zealand is therefore pleased to be a sponsor of the draft resolution in document A/53/L.16, and we look forward to action being taken upon it shortly. We consider that it is quite clear that the draft resolution in no way prejudges any question relating to reform of the Security Council. We believe its adoption will help significantly to move the work of the Open-ended Working Group forward.

I would now like to turn to a further matter to which my Foreign Minister referred during the general debate this year. The question of equitable representation on the Security Council is a key part of the Open-ended Working Group's mandate. It is difficult logically to see how equitable representation can be addressed without undertaking a review of the present regional groupings. The proposed reconfiguration of regional groupings outlined from this rostrum a few minutes ago by the Permanent Representative of Fiji clearly deserves thorough consideration in the course of such a review. Indeed, it is conceivable that the absence of any such review so far is one of the reasons for the lack of progress in cluster I, compared with cluster II.

The present regional group system was put in place some 35 years ago, in 1963, when the non-permanent membership of the Council was expanded from six to 10. This system is sadly out of date; it reflects the political geography of the 1960s, including the cold-war East-West confrontation and the immediate post-colonial period.

The system also locks in grave disparities in representation. Members of the African and Asian groups in particular have fewer opportunities to take part in the work of the Organization than members of smaller groups. In other words the current regional groups are not only an anachronism; they quite clearly produce inequitable representation on the Security Council and elsewhere.

Since 1963 the membership of the Organization has almost doubled. Yet there has been no comprehensive effort to ensure that the regional groupings are still delivering what they were set up to do. They are now manifestly inadequate and present, in our view, an obstacle to reform in their present configuration. New Zealand will be pleased to join with other "friends of reconfiguration" in seeking uncontroversial ways of addressing this problem.

Mr. Fowler (Canada) (*interpretation from French*): I doubt that there is a more important issue, or one that will have a more profound effect on the United Nations, than the reform of the Security Council. The wrong choice can call into question the very legitimacy of the Security Council and the viability of the United Nations. We must not underestimate this question of credibility. The effectiveness of the Council's decisions depends entirely on the extent to which United Nations Members remain willing to implement them.

It was the early realization of the enormous consequences of our actions that dictated our decision, in resolution 48/26, to require that we reach general agreement on any changes we intend to bring to the composition and working methods of the Security Council. Only by meeting this requirement, we believe, would we be able to provide sufficient legitimacy for the reform of a body whose decisions are binding on all Member States. In spite of our eagerness to modernize this most vital part of our Organization, whose working methods and composition, we surely agree, do not adequately reflect today's realities, we must ensure that we get these vitally important reforms right the first time. The negative consequences of getting it wrong would be tremendous indeed.

Canada has worked actively in the debates of the Open-ended Working Group since its inception to make the Security Council a more responsible, more transparent and more open body. To this end we have sought to make the working methods of the Council more transparent and efficient, thereby making its decisions more legitimate and effective. When we join the Council for two years on 1 January, we will continue to work towards these ends.

Our focus in the Working Group on the issues of size and composition has also been intended to buttress the legitimacy and effectiveness of the Council. Changes in the size of the Security Council must be driven by the increased membership of the Organization, as well as, of course, by the spirit and the letter of Article 23 of the Charter. There must be logic behind our decisions on reform — logic rooted in the fact that the Security Council represents all Member States and that the Charter defines very clearly the qualities that ought to inform the process of selection for Council membership. Only by following these clear guidelines can we ensure that the Council's credibility is not eroded and that it will have both the tools and the support necessary to carry out its mandate effectively.

(*spoke in English*)

This year's report of the Open-ended Working Group contains concrete evidence of progress in the working methods of the Security Council, the transparency of its work and its decision-making process. By way of example, Canada is part of the vast majority of Member States — indeed, a majority which constitutes a clear general agreement — which has called for limiting the scope of the veto power of permanent members. Indeed, one widely accepted element, with which Canada fully agrees, is the desire to restrict the veto to Council decisions taken under Chapter VII of the Charter. Another example, and one of enormous importance to troop-contributing countries, is that the draft provisions prepared by the Bureau of the Working Group, and contained in an annex to its report, reflect the demand that the Security Council ensure meaningful participation by troop contributors in the Council's deliberations when their nationals — military or civilian — are in the crossfire of the conflicts to which the Council has dispatched them.

In this connection, I would like to acknowledge the note by the President of the Security Council, which takes some steps in this direction, but which still falls short of the draft proposals in the Working Group's report. Therefore, Council practice still does not reflect the will of the majority of the Members in this matter.

The signs of ever-increasing transparency are evident beyond the report of the Open-ended Working Group. More and more, individual Council members are making real efforts to enhance Council transparency through various means, such as the publication of summaries by Council Presidents as official documents and their inclusion in the annual report of the Security Council; the regularized, detailed, daily briefings by Council Presidents; the greater willingness by Council members to broaden the Council's horizons through thematic debates and the still fledgling efforts to offer opportunities to Member States to present their views to the Council before formal decisions are taken.

Evidence of tangible progress is lacking, however, with regard to the matters of the size and composition of the Council. This should not be surprising to any of us. The stakes are very high: they involve nothing short of how we select those who will make binding decisions on our behalf on vitally important questions that have an impact, often very directly, on our individual national security, as well as on our collective security.

Yet more progress has been made than first meets the eye. In the process of considering the various proposals that have emerged in the last five years, we have come a long way from our first, very tentative, consideration of approaches to Security Council expansion. I believe that most Member States now agree that the expansion of the size of the Security Council should be based primarily, but perhaps not exclusively, on the long-overlooked necessity of creating a Security Council which better reflects and represents the composition of the Assembly.

Canada's position has been, and will continue to be, to promote, as quickly as possible, general agreement in the Working Group on the shape of a Security Council which will best serve the international community's needs in the next century. To achieve this, we will continue to oppose any proposals which do not put the needs of the United Nations and its Member States first.

Further, we will continue to oppose the aspirations of a few Member States to permanent membership free from the inconvenience of elections — exclusively on the basis that such a decision would stand against so much of what the United Nations has come to stand for: democracy, openness, accountability and responsibility. By the same token, we will continue to pursue with vigour all solutions aimed at enhancing the representativeness, the credibility, the accountability and thus the effectiveness of a reformed Security Council.

It is for these reasons that Canada is a sponsor of draft resolution A/53/L.16, a draft resolution which we sincerely hope will breathe life into the process of reforming the Security Council by clearing away the underbrush of suspicion and recrimination which has so informed the matter of expansion over the past few years. This is a purely procedural draft resolution designed only to ensure that any draft resolution or manoeuvre seeking to change the composition of the Security Council must be approved by a credible majority of the United Nations membership, specifically no less than the two thirds of all Members prescribed by Article 108 of the Charter.

There are many fundamental disagreements among us on the future shape and workings of the Security Council, but draft resolution A/53/L.16 does not presume to address them. The intention of the sponsors is exclusively to settle the persistently destabilizing question of the majority required to change the composition of the Security Council. Some have claimed that such fundamental changes could be brought about by two thirds of members present and voting, which, as we all know, might and probably would mean that such a momentous decision could be decided by a rather small number of positive votes, a number which could well represent less than half of the membership of the Assembly.

Personally, I do not believe that there are many left who would maintain such a position. I would like to know, however, if that presumption is accurate. I therefore invite any Member States that do in fact believe that changes to the composition of the world's only truly executive authority might indeed be authorized by less than two thirds of the membership — as it stands, that means less than 125 votes — to make clear their position on this matter. If no countries hold such a view, this draft resolution should have no trouble finding consensus.

The sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.16 seek to settle the issue of the size of the majority required to change the membership and the working methods of the Security Council once and for all; no more and no less. Our intent is limited to this issue, and we would be pleased to see clarity brought to its wording to achieve this purpose and thus to attract the desired consensus.

I want to make it absolutely clear that the draft resolution does not, and is not intended to, prejudge the outcome of any substantive question relating to the reform of the Security Council. Nor should it be considered to be contrary to the aspirations of any region or any Member State. Canada strongly believes that all United Nations Members, but especially those aspiring to permanent-member status, would benefit from the adoption of draft resolution A/53/L.16. The draft resolution will help ensure that any expansion of the size and composition of the Security Council is agreed upon by a clear and distinct majority of the members of this Assembly. The adoption of such a draft resolution can only enhance the legitimacy of any reformed Security Council as it faces the emerging challenges of the next century.

I can assure you, Sir, of Canada's full and active participation once the Open-ended Working Group resumes its deliberations again in the new year.

Mr. Al-Otaibi (Kuwait) (*interpretation from Arabic*): Today the General Assembly is discussing one of the most important items on its agenda: "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". Last year, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in

the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council submitted a report on this item (A/52/47). I wish to express my appreciation to the former Chairman of the Working Group and President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session, Mr. Hennadiy Y. Udovenko, and to the Vice-Chairmen for the distinguished manner in which they guided the work of the Group.

Over the past five years, talks in the Working Group have highlighted on the need to restructure the Security Council with a view to achieving greater transparency in its working methods. The various papers submitted to the Working Group by a number of countries and groups agree on the need to reform the Council in order to enhance its role in the maintenance of international peace and security and to make it better able to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. But, despite agreement among Member States on the principle of reform, the Working Group has been unable, even after five years of discussion, to reach general agreement on the number of seats to be added or on the Council's working methods. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that progress has been made, particularly on the working methods of the Council. There was nearly general agreement on a number of modifications to the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

On a number of occasions, both individually and in the context of the groups to which it belongs, Kuwait has stated its position on the increase in the membership of the Council and on the improvement of the Council's working methods. Today's debate in the General Assembly provides another opportunity for us to reaffirm our position, which is based on the following points.

First, Kuwait supports an increase in the membership of the Council; but the increase must not be a substantial one if the Council is to retain effectiveness and efficiency in its decision-making as it addresses conflicts that pose a threat to international peace and security.

Secondly, the increase in the membership of the Security Council must be consistent with the principles of the sovereign equality of all Member States and with the principle of equitable geographical distribution, so that the new membership will reflect the universality of the United Nations.

Thirdly, in the event of general agreement on an increase in the permanent seats, we would want such an increase to be limited, and would want such seats to be filled by countries that in their relations with the United Nations have proved their ability to carry out major responsibilities with respect to the maintenance of international peace and security and to realize the purposes and principles of the United Nations in all political, economic, social and cultural fields. Those countries must be elected by the General Assembly in accordance with procedures and criteria to be agreed upon.

Fourthly, with respect to reform and improvement of the working methods of the Security Council and to the Council's evolving relations with other United Nations organs, particularly the General Assembly, we support all proposals intended to add transparency and clarity to the work of the Council and to ease the flow of information among States Members of the United Nations and their access to it. We consider that the negotiating paper submitted by the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries on 11 March 1997 included a number of constructive proposals in this sphere, and that it could be a good basis for enhancing transparency and developing the work of the Council.

In this context, we agree with the need to codify the measures to be taken by the Security Council to improve its working methods and those that were agreed upon in the Open-ended Working Group, without waiting for agreement on other questions such as the size and composition of the Council and its decision-making process.

Fifthly, Kuwait supports the development of a mechanism for the election of non-permanent members of the Security Council in accordance with Article 23, paragraph 2, of the Charter. That would offer greater opportunities to small States such as Kuwait to attain Council membership and to contribute to its work.

Finally, with regard to the veto power, the discussions in the Working Group have demonstrated that there is almost general agreement on the importance of limiting and controlling the scope of the use of the veto power, and a number of meritorious proposals have been submitted in this connection. We hope that we will reach a consensus formula that will satisfy all the parties and guarantee that the Council will discharge its work without impediments.

In conclusion, we hope that the discussions in the Working Group will lead to a consensus that would guarantee the enhancement of the role of the Council in

the maintenance of international peace and security so that it can face the challenges of the coming century. My delegation will effectively take part in the upcoming discussions in the Working Group in order to realize those objectives.

Mr. Kastrup (Germany): First of all, let me thank our former President of the General Assembly and Chairman of the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council, Ambassador Udovenko, as well as the co-Vice-Chairmen of the Working Group, Ambassador Breitenstein and Ambassador Jayanama, for their guidance and personal involvement in this year's deliberations. Chairing this Working Group has not always been an easy task, but our Chairman and Vice-Chairmen did their very best to advance its work further.

Reform of the United Nations, including the reform of the Security Council, remains of utmost importance for the Organization. This assessment has been reconfirmed by the overwhelming majority of the heads of State and Government as well as by foreign ministers and permanent representatives during the general debate in the General Assembly. It is a necessity which is imposed by today's political realities, and it has always been our understanding that it is part and parcel of the ongoing effort to reform the United Nations as a whole and make it fit for the twenty-first century. If the United Nations does not reflect the political realities of the world today, the Organization will not be able to cope with the challenges of the next millennium. This is especially true for the Security Council.

The composition of the Security Council must adequately correspond to today's political situation. Let me reiterate once again that, contrary to what has sometimes been suggested, my Government has never supported the so-called quick fix. In our view, the Council has to be enlarged by adding new members, permanent and non-permanent, from the developing as well as from the developed countries. In that respect the policy of the German Government remains unchanged.

The Council's efficiency and legitimacy will be enhanced by a more "equitable representation on and increase in the membership". Such a reform is for the benefit of the United Nations as a whole and is therefore in the interest of all those Member States that desire a strong and efficient United Nations. What we now need is a concrete reform approach that will result in serious negotiations instead of continuing endless discussions.

When we take stock of the deliberations of the Open-ended Working Group as we are doing now in this debate, one has the impression that this is the same procedure as every year: we note the report of the Working Group and then we go back to continue our discussions in the Group. This is now happening for the sixth time. I think that we have to ask ourselves, are five years not sufficient for consideration? Do we really need another year to consider Security Council reform? Have there not been enough reports of the Working Group? Should we not be ready at this point to go further? Should we not leave the field of discussions and move forward to make the politically necessary decisions?

Since 1993, the debates in the General Assembly and the discussions in the Working Group, as well as the Group's reports, have provided all of us with an impressive amount of statements, positions and proposals. We have on the table all the ideas concerning the reform of the Security Council. We have been "considering" for five years; now it is time to move on to substantial negotiations. If we do not act now, the Open-ended Working Group risks becoming the never-ending working group.

Speaking of the actual report of the Working Group, this document is more a reason for concern and disappointment to us than it is a document — and I quote from the resolution by which the Assembly established the Group — "on the progress of its work to the General Assembly" (*resolution 48/26, para. 2*). It is a rather technical paper that does not reflect at all the importance of the issue of Security Council reform, let alone its political dimension. It lacks analysis and assessment, outlook and vision, and thus it lacks progress. Furthermore, the only substantial information is more or less hidden in the annexes.

The German delegation, as well as other delegations, argued in favour of an additional recommendation to include in the report at least an encouragement to come to a meaningful solution before the end of this millennium. Regrettably, even this modest approach was not acceptable to some delegations.

It sometimes seems that the Working Group is preventing Security Council reform rather than making it happen. It also seems that, for example, procedural considerations, like when and how the General Assembly

should take a decision on Council reform, have become more and more important and have been discussed almost more frequently than matters of substance.

In our view, there are only two options: either to continue with the unsatisfactory present situation, leaving the Security Council as it is and thereby risking its losing its credibility, efficiency and legitimacy; or to step forward and reform the Council to bring it closer to today's political realities and thus make it more the equitable and legitimate body it needs to be to cope with today's challenges and those of the future. From my delegation's point of view, we can win only by pursuing the second option. This also means that we have to put the reform issue on the top of our list of priorities.

When we decide to get serious about reform of the Security Council, we must take into consideration that at the beginning of the negotiation process, many of us will try to bargain for the "best" positions. But we must realize that if these "best" positions are maintained or new ones added, the failure of Security Council reform is guaranteed. Successful negotiations need flexibility and compromise, not preconditions or fixed positions.

We must also realize that any reform of the Security Council will be a compromise which will satisfy a majority, but probably not everyone. However, every delegation introducing a concrete reform project would be well advised to do so with the largest possible majority in mind, if only to ensure success in winning the crucial vote. At the same time, we must bear in mind that the reform of the Security Council demands the broadest possible support. Without it, it would not have the necessary legitimacy.

Secondly, we need to know where we want to go and where we can go; this means that we need a realistic agenda for reform.

Having said this, I would like to make it very clear that no rush or surprise act whatsoever is implied. This takes into consideration the notion of the refusal of any kind of imposed time-frame — a notion which has entered into the declarations of important groups of Member States. Germany could not agree more with this position. No one can impose a time-frame on the General Assembly. It is clear that such an important issue as Security Council reform can be dealt with only on the basis of broad consultation and majority support. And lastly, no one can impose a time-frame, since the General Assembly is always the master of its own agenda.

However, we do need an agreed agenda. Past experience, and experience in politics in general, has shown us that little or nothing can happen if one does not have a vision combined with a certain idea of when and how something should happen.

With respect to the strategy behind draft resolution A/53/L.16, I should like to point out two things. First, my delegation was not, and still is not, ready to table a draft resolution on Security Council reform. And secondly, if we had reached agreement on a proposal, it would not have been presented to the membership by surprise. We have always been clear on that to everyone, including the main sponsors of document A/53/L.16.

Thirdly, we have the impression that the sponsors of A/53/L.16 always want to preclude serious discussion on something which does not yet exist. Are they afraid to present their own concrete reform project? And fourthly, like a large number of other countries, we have serious doubts about the legality of A/53/L.16.

At this point I should like to put aside my prepared statement. We are really concerned that damage might be done to the Charter. Yesterday our Brazilian colleague rightly pointed out that the legal implications of the draft resolution contained in A/53/L.16 go beyond Security Council reform and could be used to create obstacles to the advancement of other important causes.

I should like, Sir, to appeal to your responsibility to see to it that the Charter is protected. We think that further consultations will be necessary once all delegations have spoken, and I should like to suggest that your support and guidance might be very helpful in this effort. Despite the slow progress made by the Working Group to date, we believe that there still is a chance for a true reform and complete overhaul of the Security Council.

The United Nations can count on Germany and our active commitment.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): For five consecutive sessions of the General Assembly, the Open-ended Working Group on the Question of Equitable Representation on and Increase in the Membership of the Security Council and Other Matters Related to the Security Council has deliberated on the agenda item with renewed intensity. The objective is to search for an acceptable formula for a more representative, more legitimate, more democratic, more efficient and, last but

not least, more transparent Security Council. The attainment of this objective is long overdue.

We are now at a critical stage in our continued efforts to build upon the progress that has been achieved over these years. Many important proposals on Council reform have been made and discussed, from expansion to size and composition, from working procedures to decision-making and the veto. Even the procedures and decision-making in the Working Group and the reform process itself have been subject to thorough discussion. Lately, the latter issue has, in fact, featured prominently in the discussion. Clearly, what is lacking is not ideas and proposals but the necessary political will on the part of Member States, without which the entire undertaking will become increasingly an exercise in futility.

It is an undeniable fact that a considerable divergence of views on certain aspects of the reform of the Security Council still exists. The process is indeed complex and challenging. We believe that the challenge of change and reform must be met, lest the opportunity slip away at the expense of the continued viability and relevance of our Organization as it prepares itself to meet the challenges of the new millennium. Therefore the most important task before us at this session of the General Assembly is to continue to consolidate and strengthen the points of convergence among us while at the same time trying to bridge the remaining gaps towards a compromise solution. My delegation is of the view that unless we manifest the necessary political will to move the process forward to serious negotiations on a final, acceptable package, we run the real risk of worsening the current impasse and thereby increasing the creeping sense of cynicism and pessimism among Member States, which would be detrimental to the reform process. In order to avoid the drift towards the weakening of the reform process, we should steer away from introducing ideas that will have the effect of further complicating what is already a very complex and complicated matter.

My delegation would encourage you, Sir, as President and current Chairman of the Working Group, to use the prestige and prerogatives of your office, as well as your considerable diplomatic skills and experience, to make every effort to break the present impasse and to actively steer the process forward. The challenge before you, Sir, and before all Member States, is to determine whether further examination of different aspects of Council reform could expedite the process of putting together that final, acceptable package. Specifically, the upcoming discussion in the Working Group should propel this process forward by putting together the necessary outline of a reform package, one that could be developed and refined to meet the requirement of general agreement.

Following five years of extensive and substantive deliberations, most of the key elements of reform have become clearer, or at least less ambiguous. However, due to strongly held national positions on a few vitally important issues, the Working Group has not been able to make any breakthrough in this exercise. Indeed, it is not even in a position to submit any agreed recommendations on the substance of its work, except for the continuation of the work of the Working Group during this session of the General Assembly. Strong and fundamental differences remain in respect to such questions as permanent-membership expansion, total size of an enlarged Council, methods of selecting new permanent members, and, finally, the problem of the veto right of both the current and prospective permanent members.

Obviously, all these important elements need further in-depth consideration during the upcoming sessions of the Working Group. However, we do not believe in protracting the discussions longer than is practically necessary to reach an agreement on these problems. The single most important issue of political will must be pondered by all Member States if we are to make any headway in our deliberations.

Malaysia's views and proposals on the reform of the Security Council have been made amply clear in our past statements in the General Assembly and in the Working Group and require no repetition. We stand by them. We continue to believe there is need for a comprehensive reform of the Council to ensure greater democracy and representativeness, as well as improved efficiency and transparency, and, more importantly, accountability. We have made our proposals on the various aspects of Council reform with a degree of practicality and reasonableness impelled not by narrow national interests but by the larger interests of the Organization and the international community. It is our fervent hope that through such an approach by all Member States we collectively will be in a position to move the process forward.

It is of paramount importance that all Member States address the question of Council reform in a constructive and progressive manner. It is understandable that, given the complexity and diversity of the issues before us, Member States require adequate time to reflect on the

previous discussions in the Working Group. It is our fervent hope that when the Working Group reconvenes, we will be in a position to embark on concrete efforts to consolidate various positions, as will be necessary for the Working Group to come up with any agreed recommendations for the General Assembly.

In this context, we maintain that any form of recommendations, either substantive or procedural, has to be agreed upon by the Working Group in accordance with the established practice in that body. We also believe that such recommendations should encompass not only procedural questions but, more importantly, the substantive issues that form the integrated package of the reform exercise. Towards this end, my delegation looks forward to making further constructive contributions to the work of the Working Group. We will join any effort that will contribute towards assembling the final package so as to expedite, and not delay, the process of reaching general agreement. We hope the debate on this item in the General Assembly will help promote an atmosphere conducive to positive and constructive discussion in the Working Group, and not one that will lead to controversy and divisiveness among us.

Mr. Sharma (India): Five years ago we decided to establish an open-ended working group to consider all aspects of the question of increase in the membership of the Security Council and to effectively address other matters related to the reform of the Council. Even as we stand on the threshold of a new millennium, a consensus continues to elude us on this very vital issue for the United Nations and the world community. There is a need to step up efforts to reach an agreement acceptable to a broad majority of Member States.

It is universally accepted that the present composition of the Security Council is unrepresentative and, indeed, anachronistic. Notwithstanding the considerable work done by the Working Group, the challenge that confronts us at present is to translate the pervading sentiment in favour of Council reform to a general agreement on the nature and modalities of such an exercise. The core elements of a comprehensive reform package have to include an expansion of the Council's membership, improvement in its working methods and changes in the process of decision-making.

It is clear that the membership of the Security Council needs to be expanded in both the permanent and non-permanent categories. The total membership of the United Nations has grown manifoldly since the birth of the Organization in 1945, and yet one of its most vital organs, the Security Council, has remained unresponsive. This fact is recognized in the statistics. The ratio of the Security Council membership to General Assembly membership has declined from 1:4 at the time of the adoption of the Charter, to 1:12 at present, a threefold increase in the adverse ratio. The ratio of permanent members of the Council to Assembly members has declined even more sharply: from 1:10 in 1945 to 1:37 now. Two thirds of humanity is denied permanent representation in the Security Council of an organization that is supposed to represent "the peoples of the United Nations". The overwhelming majority of the United Nations membership consists of developing countries, and yet they are grossly under-represented among the permanent members of the Council. Therefore, for the Security Council to be representative of the general membership, its expansion in both the permanent and non-permanent categories, to take into account representation of the developing world, has become imperative.

It is ironic that while the Security Council's agenda is cluttered with problems pertaining to the developing world and of vital significance to it, four of the five permanent members represent the developed world, which is inappropriately placed to be sensitive and responsive to the trials and tribulations of developing countries in the way required. Any votary of democracy, which has made great strides globally, would recognize the inherent imbalance and unfairness of such an arrangement, where the vast majority remains an object, without a voice in these councils, without the say in their outcome as members on an equal footing.

The expansion of the Security Council must equip it to face the challenges of the next century. A comprehensive package aimed at expanding and strengthening the Council has become necessary. Any attempt to limit such an exercise to a piecemeal expansion, to the detriment of developing countries, would not only weaken the Council's credibility but would also nullify the basic need to impart greater democratization and transparency to the Council's work.

The impact of the absence of representation of developing countries as permanent members is seen everywhere: on the countries and problems which are before the Security Council, on the Council as an institution, on the permanent members seeking to resolve the crisis and, indeed, on the United Nations itself, which ultimately has to shoulder the blame when the Council's

decisions go awry. We have had occasion to make this point at greater length in the Open-ended Working Group.

In a flexible interpretation of the discharge of its mandate to preserve peace and security, the Security Council has begun to address economic, social, human rights, environmental and other issues, since it considers them to be important to questions of peace and security. In such a situation, it is all the more imperative that developing countries have an effective say in the decisions of the Council, since the vast majority of these problems lie in the developing world. Can the Council act convincingly on these issues, without taking into account and reflecting faithfully in its decisions, on equal terms, the perspectives of those who are affected? In the Council's decision-making structure, the permanent members carry the preponderant capability to influence decisions; non-permanent members are able to make only a limited impact. Therefore, the presence of developing countries as permanent members in the Council is crucial, as is the increase in non-permanent members.

Prime Minister Shri Atal Behari Vajpayee, in addressing the plenary of the General Assembly in September this year, said that the Security Council did not represent contemporary reality or democracy in international relations. He advocated,

> "There is only one cure: to bring in new blood. The Security Council must be made representative of the membership of the United Nations. Developing countries must be made permanent members. This is a right to which the developing world is entitled." (*A/53/PV.13, p. 17*)

The criteria for selection of non-permanent members are laid down in Article 23, paragraph 1, of the Charter and have by and large served the membership well. The creation of intermediate subsidiary categories will only deepen the imbalance within the permanent category of the Council itself, a historical anomaly which the membership must redress.

Any increase in permanent membership should be governed by objective — not subjective, selective or arbitrary — criteria. The aim is to achieve a broad-based rather than a piecemeal expansion. This can be achieved if criteria are debated so that a shared perspective informs the appreciation of what is involved in expanded permanent membership. We believe that on any objective grounds India would be considered qualified for participation in the expanded permanent membership of the Council, whenever the membership finds this decision before it. This was again reiterated by our Prime Minister in this session of the General Assembly and is a position which enjoys national consensus.

The General Assembly, which represents the will of the total membership of the United Nations, is the appropriate forum to designate the new permanent members. Permanent members are to assume global, not regional, responsibilities. The rotational model may be acceptable to some, and in this connection we respect the decision of the Organization of African Unity. However, such alternatives cannot be applied universally and are not a model, as the African Group itself has underscored. As has been observed — even in Europe, which is the most advanced along the road to regional consolidation, and where economic and monetary union have become a reality, in the European Union — there is no agreement on the rotational model.

As and when we move to the stage of decision-making, we need to ensure that election procedures do not run contrary to the basic principles that have been widely supported. All new permanent members should be designated together. There is a growing consensus that any attempts to undermine general agreement by resorting to patchwork and patently unfair remedies will only serve to prolong and even disrupt the mandate for reform of the Security Council.

Reform of the Security Council is not confined only to changes in its composition and size, but also encompasses a review of its working methods to impart enhanced transparency, greater accountability and a better comprehension of its decision-making procedures. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) has made constructive suggestions on the entire gamut of issues connected with this process, and these have been reflected in its various meetings, the most recent being the NAM summit held in Durban earlier this year.

It has been argued that a broad-based expansion that would envisage an exponential increase in the membership of the Security Council would have an adverse impact on its efficiency. It is difficult to comprehend how an expansion in the membership of the Council, guided by a consideration of objective criteria and equitable geographical representation to reflect the present realities, would militate against the efficacy of the Council. On the contrary, this would only enhance the Council's legitimacy, representativeness and transparency. It is a pity that the process of the Council's

expansion has been held up because some Members are inflexible about the size of an expanded Council. Neither would any attempt to predetermine the outcome of the restructuring exercise through the threat of a veto be acceptable to the general membership. The result has to be acceptable to a broad majority of the Member States. Both the process and outcome of the restructuring exercise must reflect the principle of democracy.

It was clear when the Open-ended Working Group ended its session this year that the time was not ripe to move to decisions on any aspect of the issues under its consideration. The only recommendation which the Working Group made, and which we expected to endorse in the General Assembly, was that its mandate should be renewed so that it could continue the discussions that are so clearly needed next year.

We are therefore not convinced that another draft resolution needed to be brought to us for consideration, and for a possible decision. Elements in draft resolution A/53/L.16, so ably introduced yesterday by the Permanent Representative of Egypt on behalf of its sponsors, do indeed draw on the language of decisions adopted by the Non-Aligned summit in Durban.

However, two points are crucial and need to be made. First, the decisions of the Non-Aligned Movement on Security Council reform and expansion are a package. The decision on part of Article 108 is one element in that package, and no special emphasis or priority was placed on it. To base a decision on only one element plucked out of a package would necessarily have the effect of distorting it. Secondly, the Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement did not decide that a decision should be taken at the fifty-third session of the General Assembly on part of Article 108, in isolation from, or before agreement had been reached on, other issues before the Working Group.

In the 1998 sessions of the Open-ended Working Group detailed and difficult negotiations were held on its agenda of work. Item 5 on this agenda, listed in annex II of the Working Group's report (A/52/47), was "Majority required for taking decisions on Security Council reform". This, by definition, will be part of the overall package on Council expansion and reform, which continues to be a part of the Working Group's mandate. Therefore, to detach this single item and bringing it to the General Assembly for a decision is in fact to pre-empt the work of the Working Group. When there have been rumours of attempts to rush through decisions on other aspects of Security Council reform also on the agenda of the Open-ended Working Group, they have not been accepted by the non-aligned countries. Any attempt to rush through a decision on any item on the agenda of the Working Group when the package as a whole is still under consideration will also be cast into doubt. Our preference would have been to strive for an acceptable and deliberated decision in its totality and to allow time for this comprehensive decision to mature.

It is quite clear from the trend of informal reactions to draft resolution A/53/L.16 that it will be deeply divisive. Most countries, even those outside the Non-Aligned Movement, are sympathetic to the view that decisions on a matter as important as Council reform and expansion must necessarily be taken by a large majority. However, many also have doubts about the wisdom of the procedure set out in draft resolution A/53/L.16 and are uncomfortable with the likely impact, which may well be to create acrimony and fissures that will make the task of the Working Group more, rather than less, difficult. This is why we hope that, as was the case last year, those who have made these proposals will reflect on the possibility of leaving them on the table, without pressing them to a vote. This would serve a harmonious end.

It is imperative that discussions on the reforms of the Security Council continue in a sustained and meaningful manner. There is no reason for pessimism even though a consensus in vital areas continues to elude us, even after five years of protracted negotiations. Often, complex issues are resolved by general agreement after a great deal of debate and discussion. While some progress has been made on the issues before the Working Group, we should endeavour to arrive at generally acceptable solutions, and India is committed to working towards this end.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*interpretation from Spanish*): My delegation wishes to reiterate its full support for the positions presented by the Non-Aligned Movement during the course of the Security Council reform process, including those reflected in the final documents of the Cartagena summit, the New Delhi Ministerial Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement ministerial meetings and the recent Non-Aligned Movement summit held in Durban, South Africa.

My delegation believes that the enlargement of the Security Council, the reform of its working methods and the question of the veto are matters integral to the reform of the Security Council and should be resolved

simultaneously. To try to separate them, to consider any one of them in isolation or to establish mechanisms other than those of the existing Working Group, far from resolving the existing differences, would make them more acute and would constitute an insurmountable obstacle in the search for general agreement.

We believe, as we have stated on many occasions, that the representation of developing countries in the Council is genuinely inadequate. That situation should be corrected through the enlargement of their representation in such a way as to adequately reflect the universal nature of that organ, thus strengthening its legitimacy and credibility.

The reform in general, and the enlargement in particular, should respect the principles of the sovereign equality of States and equitable geographic representation. The Council should be expanded by at least 11 members, for a total number of no fewer than 26. It is obvious that any attempt to exclude the developing countries from an enlarged membership of the Council would be unacceptable. Any reform involving discrimination between developed and developing countries, or between developing countries themselves, would also be unacceptable.

We agree on the importance of reaching substantive progress in the reform process. However, we believe that the endeavours to restructure the Security Council should not be subject to an imposed timetable. In any case, no decision should be reached until general agreement has been achieved.

If after every effort has been made no agreement is reached on other membership categories, enlargement should take place, for the time being, solely in the category of non-permanent members. Such would seem to be the trend of the development of deliberations of the Working Group after almost five years since its establishment.

As to the Security Council's decision-making process, my country has maintained an unswerving position since the San Francisco Conference in 1945 and was one of the countries that voted at that Conference against the establishment of the veto. Our position has been and remains one of principle, of opposition to the veto as being anti-democratic and contrary to the fundamental principle of the sovereign equality of States.

The Charter should be amended so as to ensure that, as a first step, the veto can be applied solely to measures adopted pursuant to Chapter VII of the Charter. The ultimate goal must be the elimination of the veto, which is an archaic institution, a legacy of the cold war and of a world order based upon policies of force and the confrontation between antagonistic military blocs.

It is vital to improve the working methods and the decision-making process of the Security Council with a view to enhancing the transparency of its activities. The Working Group has made important progress on this matter on the basis of the proposals contained in the cluster II position paper submitted by countries of the Non-Aligned Movement. The Security Council should accord those measures an institutional character. A commitment in this regard should be one component of the overall agreement on Security Council reform, to which we have already referred.

We underscore the view, already expressed by the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement, that, given the importance of reaching general agreement, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/26, fuller discussions of the various proposals submitted to the Working Group are called for. The negotiating process should be genuinely democratic and transparent, and negotiations on all aspects should be held, in every case, in open-ended forums.

In consonance with its obligations under the United Nations Charter, my delegation wishes to stress that it fully endorses the heads of State or Government of the members of the Non-Aligned Movement in their determination that any resolution with Charter amendment implications must be adopted by the two-thirds majority of United Nations Members referred to in Article 108 of the Charter.

It is precisely to show its full agreement on this decision and to firmly support it that my delegation has decided to co-sponsor draft resolution A/53/L.16, under item 59 of the agenda, on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters. The draft resolution reproduces in both its preambular and operative paragraphs the language on this matter adopted by the heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement at their meeting in Durban, South Africa, last September.

My delegation will continue to participate actively and constructively in the deliberations of the Working Group in 1999. We believe that comprehensive reform of the Security Council is feasible, so as to enable it

efficiently, effectively and credibly to fulfil the role assigned to it by the Charter of the United Nations.

Mr. Pham Quang Vinh (Viet Nam): The reform of the Security Council is crucial in the whole process of United Nations reform and revitalization. It is important to note the comprehensive nature of the current reform endeavour, as reflected in the title of the item itself: "Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters". In the decision establishing the Working Group to consider the matter, contained in resolution 48/26 of 1993, the General Assembly recognized the need to review the membership of the Council and related matters in view of the substantial increase in the membership of the United Nations, especially among developing countries, as well as the changes in international relations. Indeed, over the last five years, this important agenda item has received immense attention and interest, and commendable efforts have been made with a view to bringing about a satisfactory outcome.

We recognize that the deliberations conducted so far have gone more deeply into the substance of the matter, providing, at least, a clearer picture of what should be the basis for a reformed Council. In this regard, it can be said that a certain level of progress has been achieved.

Most prominent is the general agreement on the urgent need to reform the Security Council in a comprehensive manner and as a result of general agreement. The reform should include both the expansion of membership and the democratization of the Council. The principles and objectives of the reform have also been agreed: to render the Council more efficient, effective, representative, democratic, transparent and accountable. At the same time, it should be recognized that there are still major differences among Member countries, in particular concerning the expansion of the permanent membership of the Council and the veto power.

At this point, however, we may agree that we have a unique opportunity to try to achieve such a comprehensive reform. In view of the significant convergence, and divergence, of views that currently exist, the only conclusion we should reach is on the need to work harder, with greater political will, to achieve the objectives required for the reform.

After over half a century of development, the United Nations, including the Security Council, is in urgent need of renewal and reform. This exercise is intended, as we have all agreed, to make the Organization and the Council better attuned to the economic and political realities of our time and to enable it to come to grips with the challenges of the coming century. Since the last and only time that the membership of the Security Council was expanded, the world has undergone profound changes and transformations. The most obvious of these is the birth of many independent nations following the collapse of the colonial system. The enormous increase in the general membership of the United Nations calls for redressing the current serious imbalance in the membership of the Council and making it more representative of the entire membership of this Organization.

Viet Nam attaches great importance to the matter under consideration. During the last five years, my delegation has supported meaningful contributions to the common efforts of Member countries, with a view to arriving at a generally acceptable settlement, and we welcome all constructive proposals put forth for consideration.

My delegation fully shares the view of the Non-Aligned Movement that in order for this reform to be genuine, meaningful and durable, both the reform and the expansion of the Security Council should be considered integral parts of a common package, taking into account the principles of sovereign equality of States and equitable geographical distribution, as well as the need for transparency, accountability and democratization in the working methods and procedures of the Council, including its decision-making process. In this exercise, the representation of the developing countries should be further enhanced.

Here we need to underline the great importance of the Council's accountability to the general membership of the United Nations and its responsiveness to their views. This is the foundation of the Council's powers and responsibilities as envisaged in the Charter, which stipulates in Article 24, paragraph 1, that the Member States agree to confer on the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Mechanisms should therefore be devised and institutionalized to enhance the Council's accountability, which would include, *inter alia*, more frequent and meaningful consultations between the Council and the General Assembly when substantive decisions, especially regarding matters of war and peace, are to be considered and decided by the Council.

My delegation wishes to offer some further comments on the two crucial elements of our reform exercise, which is aimed at democratizing the functions of the Security Council and broadening its representation.

On the question of expansion, we support the proposals to increase membership in both categories, permanent and non-permanent. As regards new permanent members, we share the view that developing countries must have adequate representation on the Council. This is underscored by the fact that they are a majority at the United Nations and by the fact that most of the issues under the authority of the Council today take place in the developing world or are of vital interest to the developing countries. We also support the allocation of new permanent membership to countries that have the capacity to undertake greater commitments and responsibilities and have made major contributions to the work of the United Nations in this respect. Furthermore, with regard to proposals to work out some form of rotation arrangement, my delegation is flexible and can lend its support to the idea if the idea obtains general agreement. Regarding the size of the Council, though it is true that there can be no magic figure, we are convinced that a reformed Council of about 24 or 26 members, as proposed by the Non-Aligned Movement, could meet the requirements of efficiency, broader representation and democratization.

Any formula for reform will fail to be satisfactory if the issue of the veto power is not duly dealt with. We recognize the restraint exerted in recent years by the permanent members of the Council concerning the use of veto and their efforts to work for consensus decisions. However, the task of reform is also to tackle the issue in a comprehensive manner, and this privilege is at variance with the principle of sovereign equality of States. In this respect, my delegation reaffirms its support for the proposal that the veto should be restricted only to issues under Chapter VII of the Charter, with a view to its final elimination.

Pending the total elimination of the right of veto, we share the view that new permanent members of the Council should be rendered this right on the basis of equality between them and the current permanent members and of helping to redress the inherent imbalance of power in the membership of the Council, in particular between the developed and the developing countries.

It is apparent that the task before us is of great importance, having far-reaching ramifications. But at the same time it is of enormous complexity, both substantively and procedurally. Surely this will require the cooperation and determination of the general membership of the United Nations, especially the permanent members of the Security Council, as they have been accorded a special role by the Charter regarding the process of Charter amendments. Careful, thorough and innovative consideration is needed in order to bring our work to a fruitful outcome and to achieve a solution that may garner the largest possible agreement.

Mr. Ryan (Ireland): The report of the Open-ended Working Group which we are considering in this debate is one of the more detailed and substantive to have been produced. This is as it should be after five years of intensive work, and it shows that all the key issues of reform have been exhaustively considered by the Working Group. Regrettably, the report does not offer us any indication that we have moved closer to the general agreement that resolution 48/26 reminds us to work towards. This suggests, at least to my delegation, that perhaps the Working Group may have reached a stage in its work where it is timely to ask some fundamental questions about where we go from here.

However, before turning to these, I want to pay a warm tribute to the two co-Vice-Chairmen, who, it now seems, may be stepping down. Their task has been far from easy. I regret that they were deterred from exercising the fullest freedom to direct the work of the Group, which my delegation wished for and would have found conducive to making progress.

We strongly believe that an elected bureau of any committee or working group must be allowed, from time to time, to take the pulse of the membership of that group and make recommendations on how best to move the group towards its goal. In our view, it is important that when the Open-ended Working Group reconvenes next year, we ensure that its newly elected Bureau is fully enabled to give meaningful direction to our work. For example, it should have the right to consult delegations, put forward ideas, papers or non-papers with a view to narrowing differences on certain issues. We must move into serious negotiations on a package of Charter amendments, and we must empower the new Bureau to direct us towards that.

On behalf of my delegation, I wish to pay tribute to former President Udovenko for his active involvement in the Working Group over the past year, and especially to Ambassadors Breitenstein and Jayanama for the very considerable contribution they have each made to moving

our debate forward. Their intellect, dedication, patience and humour at the service of us all have been exceptional. While it did not prove possible to conclude our work under their chairmanship, we could not have completed the comprehensive discussion and analysis which we did without their judicious and wise direction.

The position of Ireland on the key issues of Security Council Reform such as size, categories of membership to be increased, working methods and transparency have been rehearsed annually in the debate on this item. I do not need to repeat them today. We have worked untiringly with a group of like-minded small and medium-sized countries to present a view that we continue to believe could provide a middle ground. At all times, we pursued what we believed to be a realistic and balanced approach while recognizing the high degree of political sensitivity surrounding reform issues.

Earlier this year, our group decided to address the question which is perhaps the most sensitive of all, namely, the veto question. We did so in the belief that it is in many ways central to the reform of the Security Council. Last year my delegation said that we were not persuaded that a way had been found for the satisfactory treatment of the veto. I fear that this year does not offer us any more encouragement.

In the proposals which the group of small and medium-sized countries presented, we argued that steps to curtail the scope and application of the veto should be part of a global approach to reform of the Security Council. We went on to provide some practical suggestions which did not require Charter-based changes. We accepted that these fell short of the fuller demands of many delegations, including our own. Nevertheless, they seemed to us to provide a possible partial solution to what remains a highly political and sensitive matter. I regret to say that our efforts were not warmly appreciated by some of those most directly concerned. In short, we were asked not to pursue them.

Yet we remain convinced that if there is one issue on which there is very broad agreement, it is that without an understanding on the future scope and application of the veto, general agreement on a comprehensive reform package will continue to elude us. We can, of course, simply postpone a decision until later — even until much later, as has been proposed by one delegation. However, my delegation continues to have reservations about any formula that would take the veto question out of the negotiations. In our view, such a proposal could be seriously countenanced only in the context of an overall satisfactory agreement on other important elements of the package. After five years, I fear that we are still not yet at that stage.

At the beginning of this statement I said that we must ask ourselves some fundamental questions about the way forward. These questions should address both the process and the substance. On the process, I want to be frank and suggest that the way in which the Open-ended Working Group conducts its business may need to be reviewed. The exhaustive debates over the past two years cannot easily be repeated in a third year. It appears to my delegation that we have explored each issue thoroughly and that another year spent in addressing the same issues or cluster of issues in the same manner would not be productive. It would, of course, further delay the adoption of decisions on Council reform, and sometimes it is hard to avoid the impression that some are far from being averse to such delay.

When the Open-ended Working Group convenes next year, my delegation believes it will be essential for it to move to a stage of serious negotiation on all the elements of a comprehensive reform package. The basis of any negotiation might be a paper or papers from the Bureau on which, in a fully transparent manner, the Group, or possibly a smaller group of interested delegations, could work. We need to inject some momentum into our consideration of all the issues, and perhaps a way to do this would be through reviewing our working methods along the lines which I have suggested.

As for substance, we have made good progress this year on the working methods of the Council. Clearly, this is an area where improvements can constantly be made. The Council itself has a key role to play, in particular the non-permanent members. The Council must be entrusted with maintaining the transparency and efficiency of its proceedings for the good of the Organization as a whole.

I have already mentioned the veto question and the need to find some way in which to address it in a comprehensive package. But with this, as with the issues of size and category of membership to be increased, greater political will is needed. It seems to my delegation that the Open-ended Working Group has explored in depth the whole range of issues which must be addressed in order to reach a general agreement on important reform issues. That we are still some way from achieving this should concern us, but it should also encourage us to

seek new ways to narrow positions. Until we do, the prospect of an unreformed Security Council will continue to hang over the Organization for years to come, with all the negative consequences that we know — loss of authority, prestige and respect by the general membership on whose behalf the Security Council acts. The Security Council is too important a body to allow that to happen.

Allow me to turn to the issue which is addressed in draft resolution A/53/L.16. When a similar draft resolution was submitted last year, my delegation cautioned against taking a precipitous decision on the sensitive issue of the majority required for any resolution concerning reform of the Security Council. We maintain that position.

We share the view expressed by other delegations that on a matter as crucial as reform of the Security Council, it is unthinkable to imagine that the vast majority, indeed, the near totality of the membership, would not be present to express their views when the time came for action to be taken by the General Assembly and that, consequently, decisions concerning reform of the Security Council would be endorsed by certainly not less than two thirds of the membership.

The draft resolution raises a number of legal concerns, in particular the direct link that is made with Article 108. This Article concerns solely amendments to the Charter and should not be linked to other types of resolutions.

It is against this background that we decided to co-sponsor a series of amendments to resolution A/53/L.16. My delegation earnestly hopes that it will be possible to hold consultations with the sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.16 with the aim of reaching consensus. It would be a matter of deep regret to my delegation, given the approach which we have taken from the beginning on matters relating to Security Council reform, if the membership were to be divided on this draft resolution.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I now call on the representative of Belgium to introduce the amendment to draft resolution A/54/L.16 contained in document A/53/L.42.

Mr. Adam (Belgium) (*interpretation from French*): The results of the work of the fourth year of the work of the Working Group, as can be seen from the report submitted to the General Assembly, are substantial. For four years, under the leadership of Ambassador Jayarama and Ambassador Breitenstein, whose competence, objectivity, patience and self-sacrifice I should like to commend, the Working Group has considered in depth all aspects of Security Council reform. The proposals to be found in the annexes to the 1997 and 1998 reports reflect the depth and originality of the proposals made. In reality, the elements for reform of the Council are already on the table. What remains is to find the final compromise that can be endorsed by a majority agreed upon by the General Assembly.

During our debates, Belgium has arrived at a rather clear idea as to what a credible reform of the Council should include. Our position is well known. It can be found in the two documents we have submitted together with nine other countries and can be summed up in the following five points: an increase in the two categories of membership; enlargement to no more than 25 members, in order to ensure better representativity in the Council without damaging its effectiveness; the election of new permanent members by the General Assembly; a credible limit on the scope and application of the veto; and, finally, a mechanism for periodic review.

Each of these points has been discussed, and each delegation has been able to evaluate and make known its position on each point. The Working Group should use the coming year to transmit to the Assembly a comprehensive proposal that could result in a general agreement. We continue to favour a two-stage approach whereby the General Assembly would first adopt a framework resolution of a political nature and then take a decision on the necessary amendments to the Charter. We believe that the framework resolution constitutes a guarantee for transparency thanks to the overview it provides on reform of the Council. Furthermore, this approach would allow us also to cover aspects of reform that require amendments as well as those that do not.

We remain convinced that the delay in Council reform is hindering its credibility — credibility that has suffered greatly in 1998. As several speakers recalled during the debate on the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly, the authority of the Council in the areas of peacekeeping and sanctions has been flouted. We note furthermore that the Council too often limits itself to dealing with the effects and not the causes of crises that threaten international peace and security. We also deplore the delays and even the shortcomings of the Council in dealing with emergency situations that require its active involvement.

Recent examples show that the use or the threat of the use of the veto once again is one of the causes for paralysis in the Council. In this connection, the "group of ten" has made proposals to limit the use of the veto on a voluntary basis with respect for the prerogatives of the General Assembly and those of the Security Council. We repeat that it is unlikely that we will reach general agreement on a comprehensive programme of reform without a real reduction in the use of the veto.

The working methods of the Council are one of the areas where the Working Group has made the greatest progress. Moreover, thanks to efforts undertaken by non-permanent members of the Council, new practices have quickly been implemented. We believe that informing all States that are not Council members immediately after the holding of informal consultations and the monthly report of the President of the Council help facilitate the work of those delegations. We remain convinced that when it is a case of improving working methods, the pragmatic approach remains preferable to the institutionalization of the progress achieved.

Finally, I should like once again to emphasize the importance of the role of the members of the Bureau of the Working Group, whose authority and free agency must be absolutely respected. Their right to take initiatives should not be called into question, nor should their neutrality. Non-respect for these elementary principles could lead to an impasse in the Working Group and could lead to a great risk of depriving members of the General Assembly of the opportunity to discuss reform, which would then be discussed in other groups, most likely less representative and less transparent.

Regarding the issue of the majority necessary for approval of a reform of the Council by the General Assembly, we have already stated that the broadest possible support — and there is solid agreement on this — bringing together at least two thirds of the membership of the General Assembly would be politically necessary.

Therefore, we have studied very carefully draft resolution A/53/L.16, which attempts to endorse this idea by means of resolution of the General Assembly. Unfortunately, the draft resolution is based on legally questionable arguments. We doubt, in fact, the objectivity of an argument that attempts to distort an Article of the Charter, basing itself on the subjective and ambiguous notion of "Charter amendment implications".

This is why we have introduced the amendments in document A/53/L.42. These amendments have been sponsored by the following delegations: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Micronesia, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the United States and Uzbekistan. It has three objectives: first, to clarify the legal ambiguities in the fourth preambular paragraph and operative paragraph 2 of draft resolution A/53/L.16; secondly, to establish clearly what the term "general agreement" in resolution 48/26 means; and, thirdly, to acknowledge the need for Member States to have the necessary time for reflection in order to find an acceptable solution to the issue of Council reform.

The decision adopted at Durban by the heads of State or Government of non-aligned countries was a major political act, and we respect it. But the verbatim repetition of a portion of that declaration in a General Assembly resolution would amount to modifying the Charter that all of our countries have ratified. The fact is that Article 108 sets out the procedure for the approval of amendments to the Charter; it does not determine the majority required for the adoption of Assembly resolutions. Moreover, it is unacceptable to extend the application of a majority of two thirds of the members of the General Assembly to areas other than that of Council reform. For Belgium, the concept of general agreement covers not only the work of the Working Group but also the decisions that the General Assembly might take on Council reform.

We understand that many members of the Assembly want more precise assurances in this regard. The difficulty lies in meeting those wishes without harming the Charter.

I want to repeat that the goal of the group of 10 in submitting these amendments is not to favour any one group of countries or any one kind of solution. Our group believes that its role is to promote dialogue and to protect the Charter. That is why we support the request to the President of the General Assembly that consultations continue under his auspices with a view to the consensus adoption of a decision on the majority required for approval of Council reform measures.

Rather than leading to sterile political and legal confrontation, consideration of the question of the majority required for adoption of a framework resolution

on Council reform could enable the Assembly for the first time to take a decision on such reform. Belgium believes that an impartial solution to this procedural question would in fact have a beneficial effect on other matters relating to reform of the Security Council.

When they formulated the basic principles of the Charter, the founding Members of the United Nations succeeded in overcoming their differences and in seeing beyond the defence of their national interests. Council reform requires that all Members live up to the universal mission of the Organization. Without vision and idealism, the Organization can only decline. It is not too late, but it is time to complete the reform.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): I have the honour on behalf of the sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.16 to present a minor technical oral amendment to clarify that text. In operative paragraph 2, a comma and the word "as" should be inserted after the words "United Nations membership". That paragraph should thus read, in part, "two-thirds majority of the United Nations membership, as referred to in Article 108 of the Charter".

I have been in contact with the overwhelming majority of the sponsors of the draft resolution, and they have accepted the change. A number of additional States have expressed an interest in sponsoring the draft resolution, and we thought that the change would clarify matters for them. A full list of sponsors will be issued later today. I should add that the sponsors have indicated their willingness to participate in consultations under the auspices of the President of the General Assembly.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): Owing to the large number of speakers remaining to be heard, this afternoon's meeting is likely to continue until approximately 9 p.m. The President, like all representatives, is most interested in hearing all the statements. But because a wide range of views on draft resolution A/53/L.16 has been expressed, and because a number of amendments have been formally proposed in document A/53/L.42, the President will continue his efforts to ensure that a decision is formulated on the priority issue of Security Council reform, something of interest to us all, a decision that accommodates the interests of all the sovereign Members of the Organization. The President is prepared to take on the responsibility that a number of delegations have proposed: to try to reconcile the draft resolution and the proposed amendments.

The meeting rose at 1.40 p.m.